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AUTHOR	Howard, Keith; Bear, Tom; Lewton, Chuck; Casey, Cindy
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ABSTRACT

This report examines the results of student focus group sessions at Ivy Tech State College. From these sessions, five themes emerged: (1) Communications--improved communication would improve student experience, yet determining how to best communicate with students and finding resources to meet those needs will be challenging; (2) Student Affairs--students believed that financial aid and career services were important functions (Overall, students were satisfied with services offered, but maintaining this satisfaction may prove difficult due to enrollment growth, unless additional resources are directed toward Student Affairs); (3) Student Activities--students not involved in activities indicated external reasons that prohibited participation (Students supported the increase in activities fees from $0.53 to $1.00, and they also indicated they would like to see intramural sports and continued emphasis on activities that involve families); (4) Academic Advising--advising was often viewed as unorganized and confusing, and arranging meetings with faculty was difficult (Providing students with more tools to self-advise or gain assistance in enrolling appears necessary); and (5) Access--students were concerned about a lack of access to childcare, libraries, labs, bookstores, and records offices. Making the college more accessible may require adjustments to the times services are offered or more emphasis placed on electronic delivery of services. Appendices include focus group session outlines and questions, and student demographics. (KP)

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Keith Howard, Tom Bear, Chuck Lewton, and Cindy Casey

IVY TECH STATE COLLEGE

STUDENT FOCUS GROUP REPORT

CONDUCTED BY THE REGIONAL STUDENT AFFAIRS OFFICERS COMMITTEE

SPRING 2001

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PREPARED AS A PART OF THE COLLEGE'S KEY QUALITY INDICATORS
FINAL REPORT - SEPTEMBER 2001

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In order to supplement information collected through the ACT Student Satisfaction and Faces of Future surveys, the Regional Student Affairs Officers Committee conducted focus group sessions on a statewide basis with students who where both involved and not involved with extracurricular activities. There were a total of twelve regions representing 16 campuses with 233 students participating in the focus group sessions. Directions on conducting the focus group sessions were approved by the Student Affairs Officers Committee.

After receiving the focus group results, four members of the committee reviewed the data looking for common themes. These final themes included: Communications, Student Affairs, Student Activities (Involved and Not Involved Students and New Activities), Advising and Access. An overview of these themes is provided:

Communications

The discussion of communications ran through all of the themes that were generated. There was a prevailing thought that if we improved our communication we would also improve the experience of the students. However, determining how to best communicate with students and finding resources to meet those needs will be a challenge to the college.

Student Affairs

Students have assigned a wide array of services and activities to the area of Student Affairs. Of the services identified, students believed that financial aid and career and employment services were very important functions. Overall, students said they were satisfied with the services offered. However, there is a concern that with the dramatic growth in student enrollment it will be difficult to maintain student satisfaction with services unless additional resources are directed toward Student Affairs.

Student Activities

Students were divided into two groups for the focus group sessions: "Involved" in extracurricular activities and "Not Involved" in extracurricular activities. Involved students enjoyed and mentioned participation in areas of community service, fellowship/social events, Student Leadership Academy, Student Government Association, and Phi Theta Kappa. Not Involved students indicated several reasons external to the college that prohibited their participation. Both of these groups expressed overwhelming support for the increase in student activities fees from $.53 cents to $1.00 dollar. These students also said they would like to see intramural sports and a continued emphasis on activities that involve families.

Academic Advising

Students stated that they felt academic advising was also an important service offered by Student Affairs. However, it appeared that many students were confused between the difference of advising and registration. When Student Affairs staff provided academic advising, students

stated that staff was very professional and tried to assist them. Students did express concern that advising was often viewed as unorganized and confusing and attempting to get a hold of faculty member was difficult. Providing students with more tools to self-advise or gain assistance in the enrollment process appears necessary.

Access

Lack of access to services emerged as a theme from the students. These concerns included issues about not having childcare, evening or weekend hours for the libraries, labs, bookstores or records offices. At multi-site regions, students expressed concern over not having access to "all" services provide by the college. There was also a desire for services to be provided electronically to students (i.e., Campus Pipeline). Attempting to make the college more accessible to students will require the institution to look into ways to offer services more readily. This may require adjustments to the times services are offered or more emphasis placed on the electronic delivery of services.

These common themes have been shared with the Regional Student Affairs Officers at their June 2001, retreat. As the RSAOC begins the planning and development of its strategic plan, the information from the ACT Student Satisfaction and Faces of the Future surveys and these common themes from the focus group sessions will be used. Once developed, the strategic plan for student affairs will be shared with the President's Administrative Council.

Introduction

The Regional Student Affairs Officers Committee (RSAOC) is responsible for two key quality indicators that measure or describe student satisfaction with various services provided to students by the College. Since 1993, the RSAOC has used the ACT Student Opinion Survey in order to gauge student feelings and measure change over time. In the fall of 1999, the College had the opportunity to participate in the American Association of Community College's Faces of the Future Survey. A review of the Student Affairs Key Quality Indicators in the year 2000, found that continuation of the Faces of the Future Survey was need, but in addition, a direct method of receiving input from students was needed as well. Based on that review, the RSAOC decided that a focus group study of students involved in student activities and students not involved in activities would be an appropriate way to measure student thoughts regarding student affairs and in particular, student activities. The Committee further decided it would like gathering these different pieces of information on a three-year cycle. Therefore, in order to keep in the student opinion survey on schedule for the fall of 2002, the Faces of the Future Survey will be conducted in Fall 2001, and the focus group activity in the spring of 2001 to be conducted again in Fall 2003.

Because it was decided in early 2001 to conduct the focus group study, all regions were encouraged to participate, but were not required. Guidelines were prepared and sent to all of the Deans/Associate Deans of Student Affairs (Appendix 1). It was suggested that two groups of students, participants, and non-participants be selected, with approximately ten students in each group. A list of common questions was also developed and distributed to the deans as well (Appendix 2).

The participating campuses were asked to provide a count of students and to provide a demographic breakdown, if possible. There were 16 campuses and 12 regions participating, for a total of 233 students. It is important that a focus group study is not a statistical study and cannot be used to generalize across the entire campus population. However, the large number of participants does provide the ability to make some reasonable assumptions and to formulate recommendations based upon this research.

After receiving the focus group results, four members of the committee reviewed the data looking for common themes. Common themes that emerged were communications, student affairs, orientation, job placement, advising, access, student activities, and new activities. Members of the group were asked to summarize these issues and to draft recommendations based upon these issues. This report will then be shared with the Deans/Associate Deans at the Annual Retreat and the results of that discussion used to prepare a final report.

While the students expressed several themes, perhaps the strongest theme is the issue of communications. Communications is an issue whether it is with advisors knowing the classes that students should be enrolled in, available student activities, financial aid options, the existence of Career and Employment Services, why they qualify or do not qualify for financial aid, or other types of campus services or campus life.

Another positive theme expressed by students is the fact that students do want campus activities, particularly activities that are either directly related to their career field or involve the entire family. It appears to include younger and older students, as well as students who are currently not active. Students also enjoy activities that enable them to interact with students from other Ivy Tech campuses. Students support an increase in the student activity fee as long as they know they would be getting value from their money.

Students for the most part seem to be satisfied with the professionalism of the student affairs staff and the quality of service offered. Students tended to express dissatisfaction when they did not receive what they felt were due them, such as financial aid. This speaks highly of the student affairs staff. However, it also means that activities such as customer service seminars, cross training, and other activities that have increased the professionalism of the staff should be continued.

Students appear to know about the various services even if they cannot name the office that provides the service, such as job placement as a service within Career and Employment Services. Also, some students believe that tutoring services or the library falls within student services.

While it will not be specifically addressed in this study, the issue of tutoring is important to students. A student in one region stated that there were no tutors for program level courses in accounting and that more program specific tutors were needed. One student responded that "tutors for lower general studies is okay, but that when you get to the higher classes in other areas where the tutors are needed, they are not there. The comments regarding tutors should be reviewed with the Deans of Academic Affairs.

Students are also concerned about the lack of childcare, both day or evening, as well as child care for older children in the evenings.

The study also validates the ACT Student Opinion Survey that shows while students want online access to registration, financial aid, and billing functions, personal service is still important to our students.

These themes will be expanded upon in the following pages, starting with communications.

Communications

As stated earlier, communications is an issue that runs throughout all of the student comments from advisors to campus life. Asked the question regarding changes to improve student activities and students responded "Better communications system. Put personal e-mail addresses on SIS Plus to get information to us." Another student, when asked why they thought that students were not involved in student activities replied that students were not aware of the various activities that were available.

The communication issue reaches across all aspects of campus life. Regarding student employment, a student reported, "the bulletin board needs to be in a better location," while another student responded, "[I was] not aware of the employment bulletin board." Regarding tutoring, students reported that counselors need to have materials on hand regarding degrees and transfer options in order to eliminate the guess work on the part of students. Other students expressed the lack of information regarding transfer as a problem as well. A couple of those comments are listed below:

- I'd want to be kept more informed about transfer opportunities
- Know more about which general education electives you can take here to transfer to other schools

Campus Pipeline is being implemented as a way to improve communications. While students appear to want to use it, the fact that it has been difficult to use or unavailable discourages students from using the system. A comment from another campus was "Campus Pipeline is a problem. We would like to see a simple, effective student system." Another student responded "Get Campus Pipeline working," while others reported that they have heard others try to use Campus Pipeline without success.

A student newspaper ranked high on the list of new activities that students would like to see implemented. A reason for that strong ranking is the fact that students see this as a way to improve communications. The student newspaper is seen as a way to "inform the entire student body on activities going on." A first year student who did not know that she could get discounted software through Campus Pipeline stated:

> Maybe we need a newsletter or something to inform people about this stuff. We just come in here green and don't know what to ask or who to ask.

When students were asked why they did not think more students participated in campus activities, a recurring statement, in addition to not enough time, was that students were just uninformed of the opportunities. Some students suggested that faculty make announcements in class regarding the different campus events. One comment was to post the announcements in a more timely manner.

Another interesting discussion centered on the start of classes. New students do not know their way around the facility, especially if it is a multi-building or multi-location campus. An interesting comment is listed below:

> Yea, students will come up and they will say, "where is room 101" and what they really want to know is where is Psychology 101. They will think it is room 101 – they just have problems reading the schedule. We had a hard time setting up the booth last year because we could not get the things setup with the maps of the school, where the rooms are, and things like that.

Returning students are willing to help their colleagues if we give them the tools to succeed. It also points out those seemingly simple things like the class schedule may not be that simple for the first time student.

When students on one campus were asked how services to students could be improved, five of the eight responses had to do with improved communication in one form or another. The responses are listed below:

- Improve availability of schedules in a timely manner
- Schedules on computer and schedule books are different
- Lack of communication to students on cancelled classes.
- More complete list of classes that transfer and where they transfer
- When the appointments are for advising and that fact that you need to make an appointment

It seems obvious by reading the comments that if we could improve upon communications that we could improve the experience for students some of whom are here once a week and some who are here every day. Better and improved communications could help retention initiatives, increase transfer opportunities, increase the number of graduates, and increase attendance at campus functions. The trick to improving communications is determining how to communicate and finding the resources to expand communications. Other solutions might be as simple as reviewing where bulletin boards are located and deciding if those are appropriate locations.

Recommendations

- Provide campus maps that are available readily through out the campus as well as posting on campus web pages and Campus Pipeline.

- Review materials for clarity – perhaps have first-time students provide their impressions of the materials.

- Improve Campus Pipeline at both the central office and campus levels. Central office staff needs to have the system functioning in a useful manner and campus staff needs to add campus specific news and resources to Pipeline.

- Perform a campus audit of bulletin boards, message boards, television prompters for location and appropriate usage. Clutter can make the message impossible to read.

- Encourage students to post messages regarding clubs and speakers in alternative locations, such as restrooms and the sidewalks leading to main entrances.

- Investigate plans to develop a student campus newspaper and a statewide newsletter. Students are interested in activities occurring on other campuses.

- Clearly identify an office or individual to have information regarding transfer opportunities and make that information widely available.

Student Affairs

Students were asked in the Focus Groups to identify services provided by Student Affairs. Responses by students did not follow the traditional areas of services such as admissions, financial aid, registrar, career and employment services, or student activities. Students did list the following activities and services:

> "Admissions; advising and advisor; assessment testing; assistance with vocational rehabilitation; Campus Pipeline; card distribution for student skates, bowling, and movies; career counseling; child/day care; club involvement; college transfer information; assistance with submitting and completing forms; information on the Connect Program; counseling; assistance for students with disabilities; employment and job placement; FAFSAs; financial aid; assistance with finding teachers and/or classes; fundraisers; help with problems and/or classes; learning resources; leave a message; library; orientation; phone registration; provide information; PSB workshops; readers and note takers; registrar; registration; scholarships; student activities; transcripts; tutoring; labs; and work-study positions."

Clearly, students have assigned a wide array of services and activities to the area of Student Affairs. In respect to the delivery of these services and activities, students expressed overall satisfaction. Staff was generally seen as being very helpful, kind, considerate, professional, personable, and knowledgeable. One descriptive quote of staff included:

> "They are very professional people. They know what they are talking about. The people really care about you. They want you to succeed."

However, students also expressed that there were some staff that did not offer the best of service. These instances were generally singled out to specific staff or events. Students explained their dissatisfaction by stating that they encountered staff members who were apparently in a bad mood or having a bad day and unintentionally took it out on the students. Other students stated that they encountered staff that were busy talking on the phone causing students to wait. This was frustrating for the students because they were in a hurry to get to class.

Issues related to financial aid and career and employment services also came to light through the conversations with students. Students viewed financial aid as very important to sustaining enrollment. This was captured by such students' comments as:

> "Without financial aid, they (students) would not be able to afford to go to school."

> "I wouldn't be going full-time without it."

Along with emphasizing the importance of financial aid, students also expressed a general satisfaction with its delivery. Services were repeatedly described as excellent and great. Dissatisfaction with financial aid often arose out of students concern if they did not receive assistance.

> "My dad's a single parent and I have three brothers and a sister and they wouldn't offer me any financial aid. So, I'm not big on it."

> "I can't get financial aid. I have no children and live at home. I shouldn't have to have kids to get help."

Students who did not receive financial assistance expressed their desire for scholarships or other types of aid.

> "Need to have something for the people who don't qualify for financial aid. Have somebody work with you to find alternatives. Because, I know as somebody who doesn't qualify for financial aid its hard to find out where your supposed to be looking for money to go to school."

Career and employment services were also identified as being very important. Many students shared this theme during the focus groups.

> "I agree with her (eluding to another student) that your future employment is important to everybody, I think that's probably why we are here. So, that's one of the most important."

Although several students identified career and employment services as important, others acknowledged that they did not know about the area. This came out as blunt by one student's comment:

> "I didn't know there was such a thing."

To another who said:

> "I didn't know that they had job placement that you could go to. I didn't know that until this semester. I had no idea. There seems to be a lot of stuff you don't find out until you get in class and hear people talking about it and that's where a newsletter or paper or whatever would be helpful.

"Getting the word-out" about Career and Employment Services was a theme repeated by students.

> "Need a better way to find out about job placement services. I don't know anything about it."

"Job Placement needs to be more visible and promote itself better."

Recommendations:

1. Students view the services provided by Student Affairs as very extensive. These services are generally viewed as being delivered in a very positive manner. However, the growth in the College's enrollment has placed additional stress on the Student Affairs staff. Maintaining a positive perception by students of the services offered by Student Affairs can only be maintained by placing additional resources in this area. Student Affairs staff must determine what types of resources will be necessary to meet the needs of an "exploding" student enrollment.

2. Several students that were not eligible for Financial Assistance expressed a desire for scholarship opportunities. In the past, the College has not participated in many competitive scholarship programs. With the increase of students' requesting scholarships that are not based on aid, there exists an opportunity to aggressively promote financial programs awarded to students based upon competitive or non-financial criteria.

3. Clearly, the College has not promoted the Career and Employment Services area. The CES Leadership Committee should be energized with the tasks of bringing more focus and attention to the successes and services provided by these offices. Regions should also follow a similar direction and bring more attention to their CES Offices.

Student Activities

While there were several questions in common, some of the student responses in Focus Group sessions targeted one of the two groups: those who have been actively involved with organizations and activities, and those who have not been involved.

Level of Involvement
Of those involved with activities, the majority indicated that they participated in one or two. In most instances, they were referring to the number of clubs or organizations, and the most frequently listed were Student Government Association and Phi Theta Kappa, with program clubs to follow. Among activities they enjoyed the most were: community service, fellowship / social events, and organizational activities involving the Student Leadership Academy, SGA, and PTK.

Those not participating in clubs or activities cited reasons such as: too far to drive, not enough time, too busy, and work while enrolled. Most said that having things offered at different times would not prompt them to participate. One mentioned that benefits for participating were not evident. Another, a high school student, chose involvement with secondary school activities. Interestingly, the active students perceived inactive students to have specific barriers to involvement: busy with children, lack of awareness or information about activities, and schedule conflicts with class. One non-participant spoke very candidly:

"I want to go to class and get in and out. That's why I came to Ivy Tech...so I didn't have to deal with the large campus life. Another said: "I would be more likely (to become involved) if I were asked."

Student Activity Fees

Both groups were asked whether or not they would support an increase (from $.53 to $1.00) in student activity fees in order to fund activities, including staff support. While focus groups at three campuses offered a unanimous NO, the overwhelming majority offered support, qualified by comments such as:

"If people knew about the activity, they'd be willing to pay. "

"It would be worth it if the increased funding could be used on methods to better inform students or to provide more funding for clubs."

"Yes, if included in tuition."

"Yes, if it went towards worthwhile activities."

Possibilities for New Activities

Both groups offered suggestions for new activities. Great interest in sports was evident. Eleven groups cited intramural teams or involvement with city leagues for sports such as: softball, baseball, volleyball, basketball, soccer, bowling and golf. Four groups expressed interest in health and fitness activities and/or exercise rooms. Other suggestions included professional career clubs, speaker series, cultural activities, and even cheerleading, dance and choir.

Family-oriented comments appeared frequently throughout group responses. In this case, one student said:

"Students spend a lot of time away from their kids when they are in classes and they don't want to spend any more time away from them beyond that."

Another mentioned that more family activities would allow more children and spouse participation.

A real interesting quote came from one of the Community College of Indiana campuses

Well, you have asked what we want the College to do. I'm finding it important, especially since we have Vincennes and they're getting into the liberals art part of it, what I'd like to eventually see is some kind of recreational activities. Whether it is sports or whether [it is an] Ivy Tech choir or Ivy Tech band or something like that. I know that we're not set up for those, I guess, extra-curricular activities or something, but I'm sure they could do something, like get

a piano for the school or student government money could buy it one of these days or something. But another thing has been suggested, somebody wanted an Ivy Tech paper. If we are going to act like a good college, we need to start doing stuff that all colleges are doing and I know we're not going to be no Big Ten sports person one for these days cause we're only a two-year college, but we should at least do something. Get our name out there better - participate in stuff. We are the Ivy Tech choir, you know and we could go out there and just bellow!

The Importance of Student Activities

Respondents in both groups identified many ways that students benefit from participation: creation of a support network; involvement with others; opportunities to develop team building skills; helping with social skill development; make you feel more a part of the school; learn how the school works; get more out of your educational experience; relief of stress; development of friendships; opportunities to meet new people; a chance to be a more well-rounded individual which can be beneficial in looking for a job, and development of self-esteem. Individual comments were thoughtful and from the heart:

"It helps to realize you are not alone."

"Rather than your kids saying 'Mommy, I don't want you to go to school,' you can say...well come with me. Let's see where mommy goes to school."

"You know my grandparents came and my grandpa actually signed up for a class because he came and saw so many he knew. This guy started talking and said you know they offer Senior Scholars. My grandpa got interested and signed up just because I exposed him to Ivy Tech during Holiday Banquets."

"Because I don't have kids or other things to do, I like to stay involved and busy.

Only a few were vocal about people having lives and families outside of college. One noted that he was living on his own in the community and not in a dorm in a strange community. Therefore, he was not interested in activities.

Ranking of Activities

Those currently involved in activities were asked to rank in order of importance five categories: sporting activities, newspaper, non-academic clubs, cultural activities and other. Repeatedly the need for a student newspaper or newsletter was cited as a means of improving communication and promoting activities and events. Interest in sports was a close second, with responses split for third and fourth place involving cultural activities and non-academic clubs.

Students not involved in campus activities were asked to identify other outside activities in which they currently participate. It was evident that these individuals are involved in their home communities. Activities mentioned included church, coaching, working with Little

League, Scouts, Boy's and Girl's Club, bowling leagues, lodge activities, volunteer firefighting, and more. Many activities center on their families.

Importance of Including Families in Activities
It was evident from responses that many included in the non-participant category may not be organization members, but do attend events from time to time. This group was asked how important it is that student activities include family members. A resounding YES came from all campus responses.

> "Spring Festival was great! My son liked it, and liked to see Mom's school."
>
> "We don't have children, but it would be nice to have families."
>
> "It's pretty important to spend time with families or significant others."

Timing and Publicity
There was consensus among all that activities should include a combination of day, evening and weekend activities in order to accommodate different schedules, needs and interests. Most said they'd like to see more activities, but noted that they would need to be publicized more intentionally. Several suggested that instructors mention activities and events in class. One suggested opening all groups to everyone during the initial meeting so that they could learn more about them. Several suggested posting of events on Campus Pipeline or in a campus newsletter.

Links with Other Campuses
Those currently participating in activities were asked whether or not it is important to meet students from other campuses. One commented that sharing starts at home, but all others offered an enthusiastic YES. Several cited participation in statewide activities with Phi Theta Kappa and the Student Government Association. They said they loved learning what other campuses were doing, exchanging ideas, and establishing a network of contacts. (Those who witnessed Student Leadership Academy gatherings saw first-hand the students' interest in such gatherings.)

Suggested Changes
Both groups were asked to identify changes to student activities that they might wish to recommend. Again, communication surfaced as a major challenge. A student newsletter and Campus Pipeline were suggested as answers to the challenge. An activity hotline was suggested, and one person noted that things needed to be publicized well in advance, as individual and family calendars fill up quickly. Another suggested a link to an activity site on the campus home page with meeting dates and times listed.

Students expressed interest in greater participation on the part of faculty and staff. Other suggestions included: a bigger variety, more diversity, more time flexibility, more evening activities, more activities scheduled during lunch, more clubs such as VICA, evening

childcare, access to computer labs and library on Sunday, formation of a choral group, and intentional efforts to locate new members. One person commented:

> "Seek members out. Clubs should invite all to come, maybe to a seminar. If you go, you'll be over the new part of being there for the first time and knowing no one."

Recommendations:

1. An overwhelming majority of the focus group participants, both those currently involved in student activities and those not currently involved, indicated that they feel student activities are an important part of student life and should be offered at various times. These times would include campus-based events offered during week days and evenings and on or off campus on weekends. The groups cited **communication** regarding activities and events as extremely important but currently inadequate. Student Affairs staff must explore options for expanding communications both electronically and in written form in order to promote participation and provide information and recognition related to activities and events.

2. The majority of participants expressed support of an increase in student activity fees (from $.53 to $1.00) in order to fund activities, including staff support. They were quite clear that the money should be used to help fund methods to better inform students or to offer worthwhile activities. There was strong interest in getting together with students from other campuses, as has happened through PTK activities the Student Leadership Academy and the SGA annual conference. With student experessions of increased interest in communications and intramural sports, along with a desire to establish connections with other campuses, we must examine the gaps: a shortage of staff and funds to support these initiatives. The College should consider addressing these interests by considering an activity fee increase. The proposed increase has significant support from student focus group participants.

3. Focus group respondents acknowledged the fact that some Ivy Tech students are simply too busy to become involved in activities or organizations, yet they value their availability. For some the level of involvement may include selected events that they can enjoy with family. While we do not want to overlook the needs of our recent high school graduates, students of all ages appear to support family-oriented activities as a part of a more comprehensive program. Children who know where parents "go to school" are more likely to accept related family schedule alterations, and there is value added to the academic experience for all. When students have support of their families, they are more likely to persist. Student comments imply that activities shared with families may impact both recruitment and retention in positive ways, Student Affairs staff, with support from Academic Affairs, should examine diverse needs and interests and identify ways to facilitate an activities program to complement the academic experience. This would direct us towards a more holistic approach to student development.

Advising

The topics of advising and student lack of access were not specific questions. Therefore the data extracted were based on comments from students which were a common theme throughout the College.

Comments about student affairs from students:

- Many students think advising is one of the most important services provided by student affairs
- Advisors need to be more available
- Some instructors do not return calls
- There should be someone from each division available to assist students and there should be evening hours
- Classes offerings and times needs to be more flexible for students
- Most students across the college felt the registration processes were good. Student Affairs personnel were professional. At the same time many students classified registration as unorganized and confusing
- Scheduling courses was the most important service offered by the student affairs
- Students were concerned about being advised into courses they did not need
- Common theme was student "Did not know" about services, technologies etc.
- Advisors are hard to get in contact with
- Mentioned quite often about providing wrong information or not knowing what they are talking about student affairs
- Having to make an appointment for advising and not enough time offered for appointment with advisors
- Students wanted to have a booklet with courses, program requirements and explanations of prerequisites etc. so they would have needed information
- Students expressed concerns about getting information on cancelled classes. This hindered their progress towards graduation

Quotes from students:

- "When dropping /adding a course, you should not have to take form to each office "
- "Student Affairs assist with schedule"
- "Advising and Academic counseling" most important service offered by Student Affairs

Conclusions:

- Confusions as to who advises, academic or student affairs personnel
- Students think advising is registration and registration is advising
- Students try to see their academic advisor, however they are not available so students seek assistance from the student affairs personnel
- Student Affairs personnel are pretty good at providing general advising but are unable to assist much when students need special advising such as course substitutions

- Students have difficulty making contact with the part time instructor. However many full time and part time instructors do not return telephone calls
- Students look at student affairs for answers and guidance. They expect the student affairs personnel to know everything. If they do not, it reflects on the negativity of the College.

Recommendations:

- Develop, communicate and promote ways for students to contact faculty. Promote the importance of follow-up by instructors.
- Get Campus Pipeline developed and encourage the academic side to utilize this. This will provide communication avenues for students, faculty and staff. This will provide self-service for students.
- Develop advising procedures so to allow students to self advise and self register. This will allow students who want or need personalized attention more time with student affairs personnel or advisors.
- Review student handbooks, orientations and other materials to make sure they are from a student perspective and not a College perspective.
- Provide continual updating, in-services for student services personnel and faculty. Both groups think that all students only see them for their needs. The college personnel may be underestimating the value and importance of cross training.
- The College may need to review the over-all policies and procedures from a student's point of view.

Lack of Access

Students expressed these concerns:

- Students expressed interest in on-site childcare, or expanded childcare, while they attend classes or student activities. Students wanted evening daycare.
- Some expressed concern over lack of Campus Pipeline – they were aware of the new services that would be available to them
- Many students feel it is very important to have computer access, while at the same time did realize the real importance of having access
- Library and computer labs should be open for evening and weekend hours
- Need more copies of tutorial tapes
- Students at multi campus regions expressed interest more or expanded student affairs' services
- Transportation assistance to the college was missing
- More information on transferring
- Lack of evening hours for bookstore, records etc.
- Schedules are not available soon enough
- Have help for students when they are getting on-line
- Weekend hours for offices, labs, library etc.

Quotes from students:

- "Labs are open only when instructors are around"
- "More reference books for all programs should be in the library"
- "Need view only screens so we can look at our grades"
- "Pipeline needs to have the bugs worked out"

Conclusions:

- Students want to use Campus Pipeline or some form of technology. If it doesn't work, it will be hard to get students to use. Some students expressed concern that Campus Pipeline was confusing to use.
- The responses to the question pertaining to computer access were interpreted in many different ways. Some interpreted this to mean for themselves to register and /or check their records while other were talking about labs etc.
- Students may need to have expanded services provided by the College in order to enhance their successes for completing their educational objective.
- Students will and can serve themselves if the means are provided for them i.e. hours technologies

Recommendations:

- Students are very busy also and the limited hours of many of our offices, labs, libraries etc. do not meet the students needs. These should be reviewed from a student's perspective
- The technologies must be refined so students and staff may best utilize for everyone's best interest
- Continue to research for way to offer and fund childcare for our students.

Conclusions

The results from the Focus Group Study Report are very insightful and will be shared throughout College with key administrators, faculty, staff and student leaders. The communication of this information is necessary in order to effect change at the campus level and is an integral part of the overall efforts for continuous quality improvement within Student Affairs. This study, together with the results of the *ACT Student Opinion Survey* and the *ACT Faces of the Future Survey*, will also be used in the development and implementation of a Student Affairs Strategic Plan on a college-wide and on a campus-specific level.

Appendix 1

FOCUS GROUP SESSION OUTLINES

The purposes of a focus group are as follows:

- Generating new and creative ideas.
- Establishing consumer vocabulary.
- Uncovering basic consumer needs and attitudes.
- Establishing new product concepts.
- Generating new ideas about established markets.
- Interpreting previously obtained quantitative data.

In the attempt to bring continuous quality improvement to the area of Student Affairs and knowing the purposes of focus group studies, each region is being asked to supplement the quantitative data gathered from the ACT Student Satisfaction Survey by conducting at a minimum two surveys.

Through these focus group sessions the Student Affairs Officers are attempting to gather information from students on:

- the perceived quality of the services offered;
- the level of satisfaction by those involved in extracurricular activities; and
- the interest of those not involved in extracurricular activities.

Participants for the focus groups studies include:

- Students involved in extracurricular activities; and
- Students not involved in extracurricular activities.

When planning the focus group sessions as many participants as possible should be solicited. It is hoped that the sessions will have at a minimum ten participants. Regions are also expected to conduct at a minimum two focus group sessions.

In order to maintain an environment within the focus group sessions that will not influence or sway opinions of participants it is recommended that Regional Relations staff conduct the studies. This will eliminate the perceived influence of the student affairs area. There is also a scripted list of questions offered that should be closely followed. Deviation from these questions will create problems in attempts to generalize and categorize the responses.

The process for the focus group sessions should follow the provided guidelines:

Step 1 – Identify potential populations of students to participate in the focus group sessions. Invite these individuals to the sessions by informing them the college is interested in their input to bring greater quality improvement to the services and activities provided through the area of Student Affairs.

Step 2 – Arrange for a room that will provide for few distractions and is comfortable. It is also recommended that attendees receive food or gifts for participation. No session should last more than one hour.

Step 3 – Ask that a staff member record both the questions and the answers that are given during the focus group sessions. This document should be completed immediately after the focus group session ends These questions and answers will then be forwarded back to Keith Howard. It is not important that the respondent's name be captured. The use of a tape recorder during the focus group sessions is permissible but not advised.

Step 4 – Ask the questions as written. If there is no response to a question, capture that fact. Record any additional conversations that take place during the focus group sessions. However it is very important that the focus group leader keep the conversation from straying too far away from the intent of the actual question.

Step 5 – Include in the written response back to Keith Howard the total number of participants and counts by gender, ethnicity, age, full- and part-time students, and predominately day versus evening students. This information can be captured before the actual focus group questions are asked by use of a survey.

Appendix 2

Questions on Student Services (to be asked of both participants and non-participants).

1. Can you name services offered through the Student Affairs area?
2. How well do you believe these services are provided by Student Affairs?
3. Of all the services provided by Student Affairs, which do you believe is most important to your success?
4. How well do you believe that this service is provided by Student Affairs?
5. Do you believe that the Student Affairs staff provide services in a professional manner? Please explain your answer.
6. If necessary, how would you improve the services provided by this college through Student Affairs?
7. Using a one word response, please rate how well the college provides services in each of the following areas (ask each participant to respond): admissions; registration, job placement; financial aid; student employment; and orientation.
8. What services are missing in the college that should be offered through the area of Student Affairs?
9. How important is computer access to student services (i.e., admissions, registration, financial aid)?
10. If you could make any change to student services at Ivy Tech, what would they be?

Questions on Student Activities (to be asked of students involved in extracurricular activities).

1. How many activities are you involved in (checking for multiple involvement)?
2. What types of activities (club meetings, community service, social) do you enjoy the most?
3. Why do you think your fellow students are not involved in activities?
4. Would you support a increase (from $0.53 to $1.00 per credit hour) in student fees to fund student activities, including staff support?
5. What new activities would you like to see started?
6. Are extracurricular activities important to you and/or Ivy Tech students? Why?
7. Please rank in importance to you these possible activities:
    a. Sporting activities (golf, bowling, volleyball)
    b. Student newspaper
    c. Non-academic clubs (College Democrats/Republicans, Campus Crusade for Christ, fishing club, etc)
    d. Cultural Activities (drama club, musical groups, etc)
    e. Other (please describe)
8. Do you think activities that enable you to meet students from other Ivy Tech campuses are important?
9. When would you prefer activities to occur: day, evening, weekends, some combination?
10. If you could make any changes to student activities at Ivy Tech, what would they be?

Questions on Student Activities (to be asked of students not involved in extracurricular activities).

1. Why are you not involved in activities?
2. Would you be involved if other types of activities were offered or if activities were offered at another time?
3. Why do you think your fellow students are not involved in activities?
4. Would you support an increase in student fees to fund student activities, including staff support?
5. What new activities would you like to see started?
6. Are student activities important at Ivy Tech? Why?
7. Are you involved in community activities (Scouts, soccer, Lions Club, church)?
8. How important is it that student activities include family members?
9. Would you support a increase (from $0.53 to $1.00 per credit hour) in student fees to fund student activities, including staff support?
10. If you could make any changes to student activities at Ivy Tech, what would it be?

Appendix 3

Focus Group Participants by Region and Campus
Spring 2001 Focus Group Survey

Region	Campus	Students Involved in Activities	Students not Involved in Activities	Total
1	Gary			7
1	Valparaiso			14
1	Michigan City	10	2	12
2	Elkhart	4	9	13
3	Fort Wayne			17
4	Lafayette			6
5	Kokomo	7	2	9
5	Logansport	7	5	12
6	Anderson	9	9	18
7	Terre Haute	9	12	21
9	Richmond	12	6	18
10	Columbus	8	8	16
11	Lawrenceburg/Batesville			14
11	Madison			8
12	Evansville	19	10	29
13	Sellersburg	10	9	19
	Total	95	72	233

Note: From the reports, it was not always possible to determine the breakout between participating and non-participating students.

Appendix 4

Student Demographics
Spring 2001 Focus Group Survey

	Race						Attendance Status		
	White	African-American	Hispanic	Asian	Other	Total	Part-Time	Full-Time	Total
	168	20	0	0	3	191	66	98	164
% of Total	88.0%	10.5%	0.0%	0.0%	1.6%		40.2%	59.8%	

	Age								
	18-25	26-30	31-40	41-50	Over 50	Total	Day	Evening	Total
	80	31	38	38	8	195	88	59	147
% of Total	41.0%	15.9%	19.5%	19.5%	4.1%	100.0%	59.9%	40.1%	

	Sex		
	Male	Female	Total
	61	137	198
% of Total	30.8%	69.2%	